

We Claim:

1. An automatic, water dispensing, filter shutoff device including a replaceable and disposable filter, the shutoff device being in removable engagement and fluid communication with a water container and adapted to disable dispensing after a predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, comprising:

a monitoring and disabling apparatus having a shutoff mechanism moveable between dispensing and disabling locations, the disabling location being one in which the shutoff apparatus is placed in an interfering position with the engagement between the device and the water container;

wherein the shutoff mechanism automatically moves into the interfering position once the predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, and without interrupting dispensing from an engaged water container;

whereby the used filter must first be removed and replaced with a new filter prior to reestablishing engagement and fluid communication between the shutoff device and a new water container.

2. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, wherein the predetermined amount of dispensing substantially corresponds with the filtration capacity of the filter

3. The filter shutoff device of Claim 2, wherein the device is capable of distinguishing between water containers having different volumetric capacities, and of moving the shutoff mechanism to the disabling location once the filtration capacity has been

met, despite engagement of the device to differently-sized water containers.

4. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, wherein the device provides visual feedback to a user that filter replacement should occur.

5. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, wherein the shutoff mechanism comprises a plunger whose vertical height may be varied to obstruct engagement between the shutoff device and the water container.

6. The filter shutoff device of Claim 5, wherein the monitoring and disabling apparatus includes an indexing ring carrying indexing teeth.

7. The filter shutoff device of Claim 5, wherein the plunger includes plunger teeth located about an outer periphery of the plunger, and the plunger also includes downwardly extending plunger teeth.

8. The filter shutoff device of Claim 6, wherein the number of indexing teeth are chosen to correspond with the predetermined amount of dispensing, given volumetric capacity of the water container.

9. The filter shutoff device of Claim 8, wherein the indexing ring rotates as successive water containers are used, with each incremental rotation corresponding to a single water container usage.

10. The filter shutoff device of Claim 6, wherein the indexing ring further comprises a retractable tooth for use in distinguishing differently-sized water containers.

11. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, wherein the filter comprises a filter media.

12. The filter shutoff device of Claim 11, wherein the filter media comprises a

carbon-loaded, non-woven media combined with pleated support media.

13. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, wherein the filter comprises a replaceable filter cartridge that is automatically ejected once the predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred.

14. The filter shutoff device of Claim 9, wherein the filter comprises a replaceable filter cartridge that is automatically ejected once the predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, and wherein the monitoring and disabling apparatus further comprises an automatic indexing-reset mechanism such that when a used water bottle is removed from engagement with the shutoff device, the indexing ring is reset to an initial rotation position.

15. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, the shutoff device further comprising a valve mechanism allowing air to enter the shutoff device during water dispensing, and preventing water from exiting the filter during engagement of a water container to the shutoff device.

16. The filter shutoff device of Claim 15, wherein the valve mechanism comprises two or more valves.

17. The filter shutoff device of Claim 1, further comprising a semi-automatic cartridge-eject mechanism.

18. An automatic, water dispensing, filter shutoff device having a disposable and replaceable filter, the shutoff device being in removable engagement and fluid communication with a water container and adapted to disable dispensing after a predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, comprising:

a monitoring and disabling apparatus comprising shutoff means moveable

between dispensing and disabling locations, the disabling location being one in which the shutoff means is placed in an interfering position with the engagement between the shutoff device and the water container;

wherein the shutoff means automatically moves into the interfering position once the predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, and without interrupting dispensing from an engaged water container, whereby the used filter must first be removed and replaced with a new filter prior to reestablishing engagement and fluid communication between the shutoff device and a new water container.

19. The filter shutoff device of Claim 18, wherein the filter comprises a filter cartridge and a semi-automatic cartridge-eject mechanism, whereby the replaceable filter is automatically ejected once the predetermined amount of dispensing has occurred, and wherein the ejection process triggers resetting of the shutoff means.

20. The filter shutoff device of Claim 18, wherein the shutoff means includes a plunger and rotating indexing means, and wherein when a used water bottle is removed from engagement with the shutoff device, the rotating indexing means is reset to an initial rotation position.